

Measuring and using information gained by observing diffraction data

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Synopsis The information content gained by making a diffraction intensity measurement is a natural criterion for deciding which data make a useful contribution and which can legitimately be omitted from a calculation.

Abstract The information gained by making a measurement, termed the Kullback-Leibler divergence, assesses how much more precisely the true quantity is known after the measurement was made (the posterior probability distribution) than before (the prior probability distribution). It provides an upper bound for the contribution that an observation can make to the total likelihood score in likelihood-based crystallographic algorithms. This makes information gain a natural criterion for deciding which data can legitimately be omitted from likelihood calculations. Many existing methods use an approximation for the effects of measurement error that breaks down for very weak and poorly-measured data. For such methods a different (higher) information threshold is appropriate compared to methods that account well for even large measurement errors. Concerns are raised about a current trend to deposit data that have been corrected for anisotropy, sharpened and pruned without including the original unaltered measurements. If not checked, this trend will have serious consequences for the re-use of deposited data by those who hope to repeat calculations using improved new methods.

Keywords: information gain, anisotropy, translational non-crystallographic symmetry, diffraction intensities.

1. Introduction

Likelihood-based methods are now used throughout crystallography to provide a probabilistic treatment of the effects of all sources of error in tasks such as phasing with a model (Read, 1986*a*), experimental phasing (de La Fortelle & Bricogne, 1997; McCoy *et al.*, 2004), model refinement

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(Pannu & Read, 1996; Bricogne & Irwin, 1996; Murshudov *et al.*, 2011) and molecular replacement (McCoy *et al.*, 2007; Read & McCoy, 2016). In all these areas, the introduction of likelihood has led to more powerful and robust methods.

Information gain, described in terms of the Kullback-Leibler divergence or KL-divergence (Kullback & Leibler, 1951), is a related statistical concept that measures how much is learned when an imperfect measurement is made. This concept has recently become particularly prominent in the context of various applications within machine learning (Bishop, 2006; Goodfellow *et al.*, 2016). In crystallography it has only been used rarely, with one example being to evaluate how much different sources of phase information contribute to combined phases (Read, 1986*b*, 1997).

As discussed in our previous work on this subject (Jamshidiha *et al.*, 2019), the information content gained by measuring a data set corresponds to the likelihood score that could be achieved with a perfect model, providing an upper limit to what can be achieved with the data in a likelihood-based method. Considered one observation at a time, information provides a way to assess how much value each measurement adds, which is especially relevant for data in which some observations are systematically weakened by effects such as anisotropic diffraction or translational non-crystallographic symmetry (tNCS). This is particularly timely, as there is now a better appreciation that weak data have value, at least up to a point (Karplus & Diederichs, 2012).

The implementation of our earlier work on information gain for diffraction data was limited to an expected value, *i.e.* what information gain would be expected for a reflection with a particular standard deviation, averaged over all possible intensity measurements that could be made consistent with that size of measurement error. The advantage of this approach is that it lends itself to simple rules: a threshold for useful information gain can be translated into a single number, the corresponding standard deviation of a normalised intensity. A table of normalised standard deviations corresponding to different thresholds of expected information gain was evaluated by numerical integration in the symbolic mathematics program *Mathematica* (Wolfram Research, Champaign, Illinois, USA), and then used to define thresholds in *Phaser* (McCoy *et al.*, 2007) without new functions having to be implemented. The disadvantage of this approach is that it neglects the influence of the observed value of the intensity. Here we explore a more exact calculation, in which the actual information gained with each intensity observation is evaluated considering both the intensity and its standard deviation. This allows a true reflection-by-reflection evaluation of the sensitivity of likelihood calculations to an individual observation.

2. Computing information gained in measuring diffraction data

2.1. Derivation of information calculation

The derivation of equations defining per-reflection information gain builds on intermediate steps in our previous work (Jamshidiha *et al.*, 2019), some results of which are reproduced here for convenience. The equations below are expressed in terms of the normalised intensity $Z (= E^2)$. Note that the expected intensity value used to normalise the intensities should account for overall anisotropy and/or tNCS, if these effects are present.

Information is gained in an experiment when some quantity is known more precisely after carrying out the experiment (measured by the posterior probability distribution for its true value) than before the experiment (measured by its prior probability distribution). As discussed above, this information gain can be evaluated by the KL-divergence. For diffraction data, as discussed before (Jamshidiha *et al.*, 2019), it turns out to be more convenient to use a rearrangement based on Bayes' theorem (equation 1) to express the KL-divergence, D_{KL} , in terms of the probabilities of the observations rather than the true values, as shown in equation (2).

$$p_{post}(Z; Z_O) = \frac{p(Z_O; Z)p_{prior}(Z)}{p(Z_O)} \quad (1)$$

$$D_{KL} = \int_0^\infty p_{post}(Z; Z_O) \ln \left(\frac{p_{post}(Z; Z_O)}{p_{prior}(Z)} \right) dZ = \int_0^\infty \frac{p(Z_O; Z)p_{prior}(Z)}{p(Z_O)} \ln \left(\frac{p(Z_O; Z)}{p(Z_O)} \right) dZ \quad (2)$$

Note from equation (2) that, if the measurement does not alter the prior probability so that the posterior probability is identical (for instance when the standard deviation of the measurement approaches infinity), the logarithm evaluates to zero for all values of the intensity; as expected, no information has been gained. Information gain is expressed in units of nats if the natural logarithm is used, or in bits using logarithm base 2, corresponding to dividing nats by $\ln(2)$. In what follows we will use the traditional units of bits for information content on its own. Likelihood is traditionally computed with the natural logarithm, but we will convert it to units of bits when comparing likelihood and information.

The prior probability is the Wilson (1949) distribution of intensities, given in equation (3a) for the acentric case and equation (3b) for the centric case.

$$p_{prior,a}(Z) = \exp(-Z) \quad (3a)$$

$$p_{prior,c}(Z) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi Z}} \exp\left(-\frac{Z}{2}\right) \quad (3b)$$

The probability distribution for the observed normalised intensity (Z_O) given the true intensity is assumed to arise from Gaussian measurement error, with a standard deviation of σ_{Z_O} . The probability distribution for observed intensities is then the convolution of the Wilson distribution with the Gaussian. This is given in equations (4a) and (4b) for the acentric and centric cases, reproduced from

equations (9a) and (9b) from work on the *LLGI* intensity-based likelihood target (Read & McCoy, 2016).

$$p_a(Z_O) = \frac{1}{2} \exp\left(\frac{\sigma_{Z_O}^2}{2} - Z_O\right) \operatorname{erfc}\left(\frac{\sigma_{Z_O}^2 - Z_O}{\sqrt{2}\sigma_{Z_O}}\right) \quad (4a)$$

$$p_c(Z_O) = \frac{1}{2\sqrt{\pi}\sigma_{Z_O}} \exp\left[\frac{1}{16}\left(\sigma_{Z_O}^2 - 4Z_O - \frac{4Z_O^2}{\sigma_{Z_O}^2}\right)\right] D_{-\frac{1}{2}}\left(\frac{\sigma_{Z_O}^2 - 2Z_O}{2\sigma_{Z_O}}\right) \quad (4b)$$

In these equations, erfc is the complement of the error function and D is a parabolic cylinder function (Whittaker & Watson, 1927).

For acentric intensities, the analytical solution to the information integral in equation (2) is given in equation (5).

$$D_{KL,a} = \frac{\exp(-X^2)(Z_O + \sigma_{Z_O}^2)}{\sqrt{2\pi}\sigma_{Z_O} \operatorname{erfc}(X)} + \frac{1}{2}\left(\ln \frac{2}{\pi} - 1\right) - \ln(\sigma_{Z_O} \operatorname{erfc}(X)) + Z_O - \sigma_{Z_O}^2 \quad (5)$$

$$\text{where } X = \frac{\sigma_{Z_O}^2 - Z_O}{\sqrt{2}\sigma_{Z_O}}$$

When the arguments give large positive values for X , both the exponential in the numerator of the first term and the complement of the error function in the denominator become extremely small, in which case it is preferable to use the scaled complement of the error function to obtain equation (6).

$$D_{KL,a} = \frac{Z_O + \sigma_{Z_O}^2}{\sqrt{2\pi}\sigma_{Z_O} \operatorname{erfcx}(X)} + \frac{1}{2}\left(\ln \frac{2}{\pi} - 1\right) - \ln(\sigma_{Z_O} \operatorname{erfcx}(X)) + \frac{Z_O^2 - \sigma_{Z_O}^4}{2\sigma_{Z_O}^2} \quad (6)$$

$$\text{where } \operatorname{erfcx}(x) = \exp(x^2) \operatorname{erfc}(x)$$

There is also an analytical solution to the information integral for centric intensities, given in equation (7).

$$D_{KL,c} = \frac{\sqrt{\pi}}{64\sigma_{Z_O}^3 \sqrt{|X|} D_{-\frac{1}{2}}(X)} \left[2\sigma_{Z_O} |X| \left((4Z_O^2 - \sigma_{Z_O}^4) I_{\frac{3}{4}}\left(\frac{X^2}{4}\right) + 2\sigma_{Z_O}^2 (2Z_O - \sigma_{Z_O}^2 - 2) I_{-\frac{1}{4}}\left(\frac{X^2}{4}\right) \right) - \right. \\ \left. 8\sigma_{Z_O}^2 \left(2\ln\left(D_{-\frac{1}{2}}(X)\right) + \ln\left(\frac{\sigma_{Z_O}}{2}\right) \right) \left((2Z_O - \sigma_{Z_O}^2) I_{\frac{1}{4}}\left(\frac{X^2}{4}\right) + 2\sigma_{Z_O} |X| I_{-\frac{1}{4}}\left(\frac{X^2}{4}\right) \right) + (2Z_O - \right. \\ \left. \sigma_{Z_O}^2)^2 (2Z_O + \sigma_{Z_O}^2) I_{\frac{5}{4}}\left(\frac{X^2}{4}\right) + 2\sigma_{Z_O}^2 (2(3 - 2Z_O)\sigma_{Z_O}^2 + 4Z_O(Z_O + 1) + \sigma_{Z_O}^4) I_{\frac{1}{4}}\left(\frac{X^2}{4}\right) \right] \quad (7)$$

$$\text{where } X = \frac{\sigma_{Z_O}^2 - 2Z_O}{2\sigma_{Z_O}}.$$

However, it was judged easier to implement a numerical integral using functions that were already available in the computer code. To avoid numerical problems with overflow of the parabolic cylinder function for large negative arguments and underflow for large positive arguments, an exponential scaling is used, where $Dx_{-\frac{1}{2}}(x) = \exp\left(\frac{x\sqrt{x^2}}{4}\right) D_{-\frac{1}{2}}(x)$. In addition, a change of variable from Z to E

avoids a singularity at zero in the prior probability of the true intensity, giving equation (8), which can be evaluated using expressions above.

$$D_{KL,c} = \int_0^\infty p_{post,c}(E; Z_O) \ln \left(\frac{p_{post,c}(E; Z_O)}{p_{prior,c}(E)} \right) dE \quad (8)$$

Figure 1 illustrates the dependence of information gain on the normalised intensity and its standard deviation, for both the acentric and centric cases. As one would expect, reflections with lower standard deviations convey more information. As well, reflections with higher intensity have a lower prior probability and also therefore convey more information.

2.2. Implementation of information gain calculation

The calculation of information gain has been implemented within the program *Phaser* (McCoy *et al.*, 2007) and is available in versions from 2.8.2 by providing the keyword command “INFO ON” in either the MR_AUTO or NCS modes. Our interest is in the information gained relative to the best estimate of the prior probability distribution of intensities, so the calculation is carried out after accounting for the statistical effects of both anisotropy and translational non-crystallographic symmetry, if present. The total number of bits of information conveyed by the data set is reported. In addition, the average number of bits of information per reflection is reported in resolution shells, as a new indicator of the resolution dependence of data quality.

3. Relationship between KL-divergence and the log-likelihood-gain score

3.1. Information gain is equivalent to the expected log-likelihood-gain score for a perfect model

The expected log-likelihood-gain, or eLLG, was originally defined as an integral over all possible pairs of observed and calculated structure factor amplitudes consistent with the quality of the model and the standard deviation of each intensity measurement (McCoy *et al.*, 2017). This approach neglects the specific intensity values and so yields a very simple approximation that nonetheless allows valuable rules of thumb. For instance, the LLG that will be obtained for a partial model will be approximately proportional to the square of the model completeness, so that one can judge how much the signal will be reduced by searching separately for two domains. When defined in this way, the eLLG for a perfect model is equivalent to the expected information gain defined in our earlier work (Jamshidiha *et al.*, 2019), when that information is specified in units of nats.

Similarly, if the eLLG is expressed on a per-reflection basis that takes account of the actual measured intensity instead of averaging over all possible values, the actual information gain for a reflection (expressed in nats) corresponds to the eLLG for a perfect model. In other words, the information gained by a diffraction measurement defines an upper limit for the contribution it could possibly make to the total LLG score. Equation (9) defines an eLLG that averages over possible values of the calculated intensity weighted by their probability given the observed intensity.

$$eLLG = \int_0^\infty p(Z_C; Z_O) \ln \left(\frac{p(Z_O; Z_C)}{p(Z_O)} \right) dZ_C \quad (9)$$

As above, Bayes' theorem allows an alternative expression for the ratio in the argument of the logarithm, shown in equation (10).

$$eLLG = \int_0^\infty p(Z_C; Z_O) \ln \left(\frac{p(Z_C; Z_O)}{p(Z_C)} \right) dZ_C \quad (10)$$

For a perfect model, the calculated structure factor is equal to the true structure factor, in which case equation (9) is equivalent to the KL-divergence in equation (2).

Inspection of equations (2) and (10) shows that any value for the true structure factor that gives a positive contribution to the KL-divergence (or equivalently the eLLG for a perfect model) will also tend to be given a higher weight in the integral. This effect is illustrated in Figure 2 for the cases of reflections with moderate and low information content. When the information gain is low, no possible choice of the intensity calculated from even a perfect model will yield a high LLG score.

4. Correspondence between KL-divergence and I/sigma ratios

It might be useful to provide a very rough correspondence between the mean information gain in the highest resolution shell and the mean I/sigma ratio. There is not, of course, a one-to-one relationship between these quantities. As seen in Figure 1, where observations with the same I/sigma ratio will lie on a line running through the origin or observations with the same standard deviation will lie on a horizontal line, the information gain depends on both the intensity and its standard deviation. Nonetheless, we can obtain an intuitive idea of how the quantities are related by considering some drastic simplifying assumptions.

First, we assume that the data do not suffer from significant anisotropy or tNCS, which will lead to dramatic variation in the I/sigma ratios within the highest resolution shell. Second, we consider that near the resolution limit, the peak counts differ relatively little from background. In this case, the photon counting statistics will be similar (and close to constant) in the peak and background regions, so that the standard deviations of the net integrated intensities (peak minus background) will be close to constant. Even then, we need a third assumption that different reflections in the shell have been measured with similar redundancy: averaging several measurements reduces the standard deviation of the mean by a factor equal to the square root of the number of measurements.

With these assumptions, we can compute the mean information gain expected for a shell of reflections with constant intensity standard deviation. The expected value is obtained by computing the KL-divergence (equations 5 and 6 for the acentric case) over all possible values of the observed normalised intensity, weighted by the probability of making that intensity observation (equation 4a for the acentric case). This yields equation (11), which can be evaluated by numerical integration for a particular choice of the standard deviation of the normalised intensities, σ_{Z_O} . Note that if all the

intensity observations have the same standard deviation and the mean normalised intensity is one, the mean I/σ ratio will be the inverse of σ_{Z_O} .

$$\langle D_{KL} \rangle = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} p(Z_O) D_{KL}(Z_O, \sigma_{Z_O}) dZ_O \quad (11)$$

Figure 3 shows the variation of this expected KL-divergence with the I/σ ratio. It can be seen that, for very low I/σ ratios less than about 0.2, the mean information gain will be close to zero, and then will increase steadily for higher ratios. To the extent that we can treat the curve in Figure 3 as approximately linear, the mean KL-divergence will be very similar even if there is a limited distribution of intensity standard deviations over the observations in the shell, as long as these are uncorrelated with the intensity. An I/σ ratio of one corresponds roughly to a mean information gain of 0.35 bit, while an I/σ ratio of 2.5 corresponds to about one bit per observation. We have not carried out a systematic survey of data sets in the wwPDB (Berman *et al.*, 2007), but have noted that the mean information gain in the highest resolution shell is frequently in the range of 0.5 to one, which is in agreement with these rough calculations because data are frequently cut with a threshold I/σ around one.

5. Applications

5.1. Pruning data by information gain

In principle, if the effects of measurement error are accounted for properly in a well-founded likelihood target, there should be no real disadvantage to including data with very little or even no signal – apart from wasting some computer time. In practice, most crystallographic methods still do not account optimally for measurement error, so it has been found that it can be helpful to limit the resolution to data containing significant signal (Karplus & Diederichs, 2012) or to prune data that are systematically weak because of effects such as anisotropy (Strong *et al.*, 2006). This can be understood by examining the effect of different treatments of measurement error. Model refinement, like molecular replacement in versions of *Phaser* prior to the introduction of the *LLGI* target (Read & McCoy, 2016), typically uses a likelihood target based on an inflated-variance Rice function approximation (equation 12, acentric case) to add a contribution from measurement error to the contribution from model error (Murshudov *et al.*, 2011; Bricogne & Irwin, 1996).

$$p(E_O; E_C) = \frac{2E_O}{1 - \sigma_A^2 + 2\sigma_{E_O}^2} \exp\left(-\frac{E_O^2 + (\sigma_A E_C)^2}{1 - \sigma_A^2 + 2\sigma_{E_O}^2}\right) I_0\left(\frac{2\sigma_A E_O E_C}{1 - \sigma_A^2 + 2\sigma_{E_O}^2}\right) \quad (12)$$

In this equation, E_O and $\sigma_{E_{obs}}$ are the normalised observed amplitude and its standard deviation, obtained by some transformation from the observed intensity and its standard deviation. Most often, the algorithm of French & Wilson (1978) is used to compute the posterior value of the normalised amplitude and its standard deviation, E_{FW} and $\sigma_{E_{FW}}$. In what follows, we will refer to the inflated-variance likelihood target based on equation (12) but using the French-Wilson amplitude estimates as

LLG_{FW} . We have shown that this approximation breaks down when measurement errors are large, whereas the $LLGI$ target remains an excellent approximation to an exact likelihood target computed by numerical integration (Read & McCoy, 2016). This target is based on an alternative Rice-function approximation, shown for the acentric case in equation (13).

$$p(E_e; E_C) = \frac{2E_e}{1-D_{obs}^2\sigma_A^2} \exp\left(-\frac{E_e^2 + (D_{obs}\sigma_A E_C)^2}{1-D_{obs}^2\sigma_A^2}\right) I_0\left(\frac{2D_{obs}\sigma_A E_{FW} E_C}{1-D_{obs}^2\sigma_A^2}\right) \quad (13)$$

In this equation, E_e and D_{obs} are chosen to optimise the approximation by matching the first two moments of the exact distribution.

Here we show that the information gained by an intensity observation gives a good indication of whether or not the French-Wilson inflated-variance Rice target, LLG_{FW} , will provide a sufficiently good approximation to the exact likelihood target. Figure 4 compares the $LLGI$ target with LLG_{FW} for observations with standard deviations corresponding to different information contents. As the information content drops even further than shown in this figure, the $LLGI$ target becomes even flatter, yielding values very close to zero with very little dependence on the calculated structure factor, *i.e.* it ceases to influence any refinement or hypothesis test; on the other hand, LLG_{FW} continues to favour calculated amplitudes near the expected amplitude from the Wilson distribution. This justifies the omission of very weak observations from any calculation that uses LLG_{FW} or any other target that does not account well for the effect of measurement error.

Given that observations with very little information content have very little influence on likelihood calculations, such observations can legitimately be ignored to save computing time once the data have been characterised, even if the $LLGI$ target is used. However, the fact that the systematically weak observations *are* weak provides information in characterising anisotropy or tNCS, so they should be included in those steps of the analysis. This is the approach taken in *Phaser*, in which the anisotropy and tNCS analyses include all data, but then data with low information gain are excluded from subsequent calculations (Jamshidiha *et al.*, 2019). The current default is to exclude data conveying less than 0.01 bit of information according to the expected information criterion. Tests in the context of molecular replacement (where models are poor in challenging cases and such data would have even less influence than with good models) show that this is a good tradeoff. The use of the actual reflection-by-reflection information gain described here has also been tested, and gives comparable results at this information threshold (results not shown). When higher thresholds are applied, the reflection-by-reflection estimate is, as expected, more efficient in identifying the reflections that can be ignored with the least impact on the calculation.

5.1.1. Effect of including weak data in the LLG_{FW} target

The effect of using LLG_{FW} can be assessed by considering which likelihood scores will be encountered and how much they will differ from the scores that would be calculated with either the

exact likelihood integral or the *LLGI* target. The largest errors will be encountered in the limiting case of a perfect model, which would have calculated structure factors corresponding to the true structure factors. Although we do not know the true intensities, we know their distribution of possible values consistent with an intensity measurement, *i.e.* the posterior probability distribution shown in equation (1). Knowing this, we can compute quantities such as the expected value of LLG_{FW} or, of greater relevance, the rms error in the *LLG* expected for the range of model structure factors that should be encountered.

For a particular intensity observation with a measured value and estimated standard deviation, we can compute an rms error with equation (14).

$$rms_{LLG}^2 = \int_0^\infty P_{post}(Z; Z_O)(\Delta LLG_{FW} - \Delta LLGI)^2 dZ \quad (14)$$

In this equation, ΔLLG values represent the difference between the *LLG* value for a particular true intensity and the expected value over all possible true intensities given the observed intensity; this is used because reproducing the deviation from the mean is more important than reproducing the exact value when carrying out a search or testing a hypothesis.

Figure 5a shows the behaviour of this rms error as a function of both normalised intensity and standard deviation, expressed in terms of bits for easier comparison to the information measure. This confirms that LLG_{FW} is only a good approximation for relatively well-measured data. Figure 5b shows the relative error, obtained by dividing the values in Figure 5a by the information values in Figure 1a. This shows that the relative error becomes large when the information gain drops below about 1 bit.

Molecular replacement calculations were carried out on a test case to evaluate the effect of these errors in practice. wwPDB (Berman *et al.*, 2007) entry 2g38 (Strong *et al.*, 2006) is the structure that inspired the development of the UCLA Diffraction Anisotropy Server (<https://services.mbi.ucla.edu/anisoscale/>), which can be used to prune weak data. The deposited data for this entry have already been pruned, but the complete data set was kindly provided by Mike Sawaya. These data were pruned at different information content thresholds, and molecular replacement calculations were carried out either with *Phaser* version 2.5.6 (the last release before the introduction of the *LLGI* target), using posterior amplitudes (French & Wilson, 1978) obtained from intensities with the CCP4 (Winn *et al.*, 2011) program *ctruncate*, or with *Phaser* version 2.8.3, using intensity data. The structure contains two copies each of a 99-residue chain and a 198-residue chain. A search for a single copy of chain A of PDB entry 4w4k, 97% identical in sequence to the smaller chain (which comprises only 1/6 of the total structure), was carried out as a reasonably challenging problem.

The results are shown in Table 1. As expected, the signal increases for both targets when more data are added, as long as those data convey substantial useful information. A molecular replacement solution is not found with either target when only data conveying 3 bits of information are used, but

both succeed using data up to a 2-bit threshold. However, the LLG_{FW} target behaves more badly as weaker data conveying much less than 1 bit of information are added, increasing the noise level: the total score increases for both correct and incorrect solutions, with the correct solution eventually being lost once too much weak data has been added. On the other hand, the addition of weak data continues to improve the $LLGI$ target even up to about a 0.01 bit threshold, and inclusion of even the weakest data does not jeopardise the solution. The results from this example suggest that, if most deposited data have a mean information gain of 0.5 bits or more per reflection (discussed above), value could be gained from retaining even weaker data at high resolution, as long as the methods using those data account properly for the effects of measurement error.

5.2. Comparing approaches to pruning data

A mode to analyse a diffraction data set and produce an output data file including the information measures will be made available in the new version of *Phaser* under development, *phasertng* (McCoy *et al.*, this volume). The original data will be left unaltered, on the principle that some programs (including *Phaser* itself) already make good use of unpruned data and that future algorithms may be able to extract even more from these data. Programs that have not been adapted to use the $LLGI$ target could easily be changed to select data based on information thresholds; the relevant threshold may depend on the task at hand. Since the weak reflections provide the evidence for *which* reflections were weak (as opposed to being unobserved) in the original data, there is potentially a danger in discarding them and thereby hampering refinement of anisotropy and tNCS parameters.

In other tools such as the UCLA Diffraction Anisotropy Server (Strong *et al.*, 2006) or STARANISO (Tickle *et al.*, 2018), pruning is carried out on the basis of smoothly-varying functions such as overall anisotropy (UCLA Diffraction Anisotropy Server) or local signal-to-noise (STARANISO). In contrast, the information approach evaluates each intensity independently taking account of the differing prior probability distributions for different reflections. When data are weak because of anisotropy, reflections with low information gain will still tend to be near to each other. In contrast, the effect of tNCS does not vary smoothly. Figure 6 illustrates the difference this makes for the human Rab27a data from PDB entry 6huf (Jamshidiha *et al.*, 2019).

6. Discussion

As demonstrated here, including weak data in crystallographic calculations adds signal and can even make the difference between success and failure. With a proper accounting for the effects of measurement errors, such as in the $LLGI$ target used for molecular replacement in *Phaser*, even data with negligible signal can now be accommodated without the danger of adding noise. This allows structures to be determined more readily even if they suffer from effects such as strong diffraction anisotropy or tNCS. The potential disadvantage of increasing computational cost without any added

benefit can be avoided by using the close relationship between likelihood and information gain to identify the observations that can legitimately be ignored. However, when optimal treatments for measurement error are not used more care must be taken about which data to include.

It is important to account first for all systematic effects that might alter the distribution of the data, such as anisotropy and tNCS, because these are essential for defining the most accurate prior probability distribution. If information gain is calculated before correcting for these effects (implicitly assuming a radially-symmetric distribution of expected intensities in reciprocal space), intensities that are systematically increased along the strong directions of diffraction or enhanced by constructive interference from tNCS will appear to convey more information. On a related note, if the estimated standard deviations are underestimated, observations will also appear to convey more information; this is more likely to be an issue for serial crystallography, where data processing is less mature than for single-crystal diffraction.

The methods described here could in principle be improved further by accounting for other effects that change the intensity distributions, such as lattice translocation defects or twinning. Twinning, in particular, reduces the variance in the intensity distribution, which should be accounted for in both the prior and posterior probability distributions. Such a treatment would quantify our understanding of how the presence of twinning reduces the information available from a data set.

Finally, we are deeply concerned about the trend for crystallographers to deposit data that have been pruned, corrected for anisotropy and even sharpened to bring the diffracting power in the weaker directions up to the strongest direction. While such treatments can improve the subjective interpretability of maps, they could be problematic for any methods using statistically-based scoring functions. For instance, an isotropic B-factor that might have been positive when refined against unaltered data will potentially become negative when refined against sharpened data.

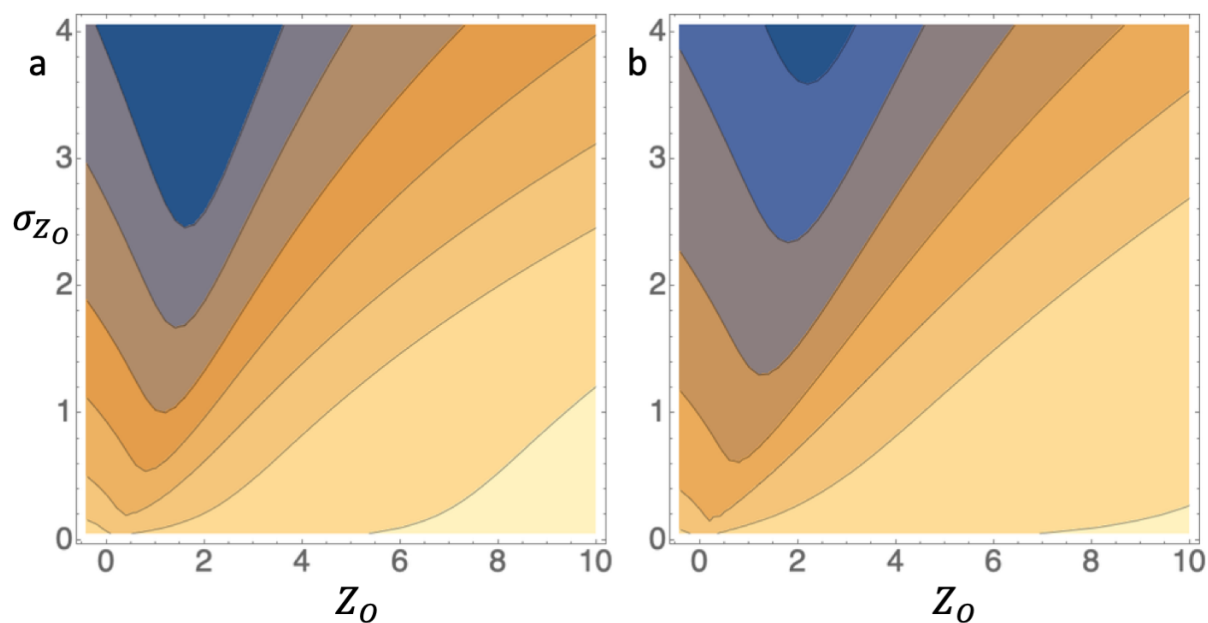


Figure 1 Contour plots showing bits of information in an intensity measurement, as a function of Z_O and σ_{Z_O} for (a) acentric and (b) centric intensity measurements. Contour lines are drawn, from the blue region through orange to yellow, at 0.01, 0.03, 0.1, 0.3, 1, 3 and 10 bits of information. This figure and figures 2 through 5 were prepared using *Mathematica* (Wolfram Research, Champaign, Illinois, USA).

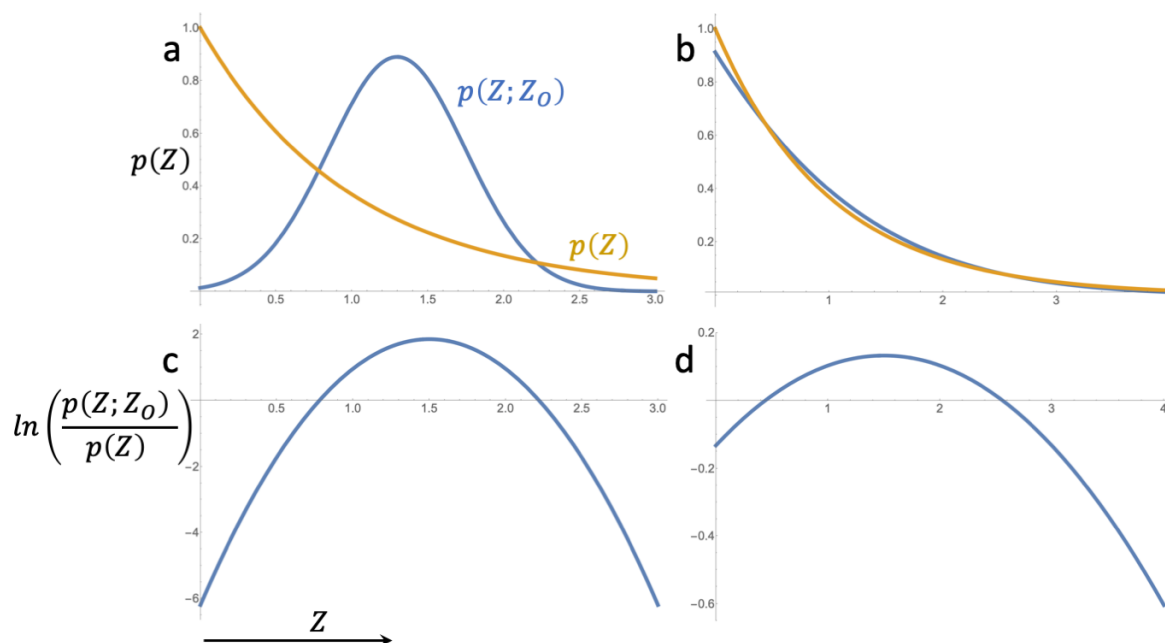


Figure 2 Illustration of information calculation for moderate and weak intensities. The top figures (a and b) illustrate the posterior probability of the true normalised intensity, Z , given the observed normalised intensity, Z_O (blue), as well as its prior probability before making the measurement (orange), while the bottom figures (c and d) show the corresponding logarithm of the ratio between the posterior and the prior. The information content is computed by integrating the log of the ratio (bottom figure) weighted by the posterior probability in blue above. Figures on the left (a and c) correspond to an intensity conveying 1 bit of information ($Z_O = 1.5$, $\sigma_{Z_O} = 0.449$) while figures on the right (b and d) correspond to an intensity conveying 0.01 bit of information ($Z_O = 1.5$, $\sigma_{Z_O} = 2.47$).

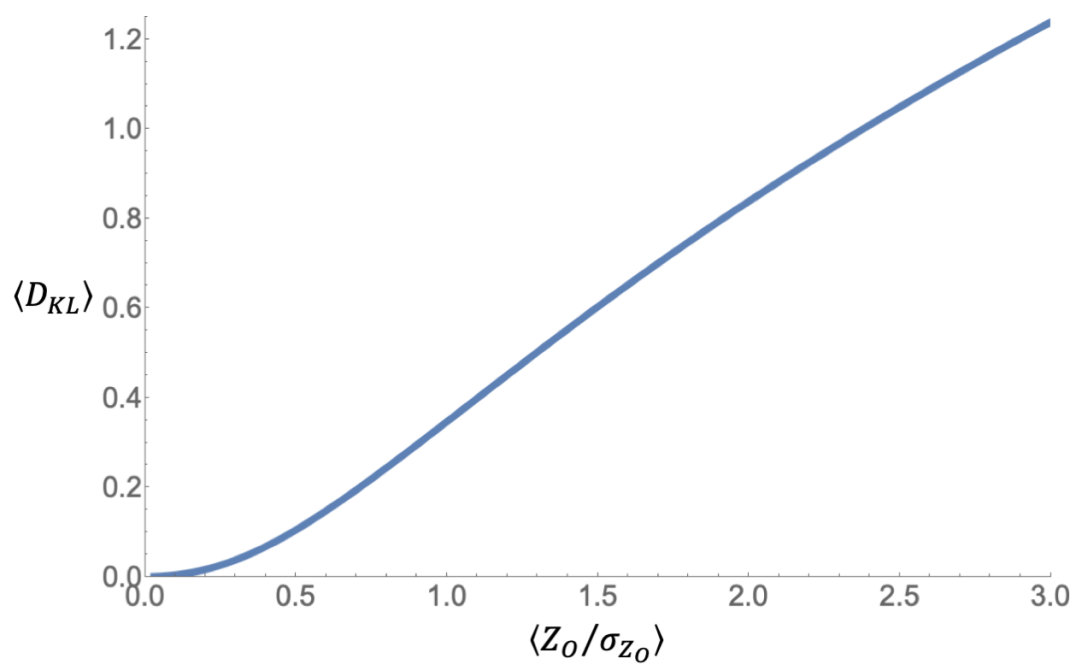


Figure 3 Approximate relationship between I/σ (represented by the ratio between the normalised intensity and its standard deviation) and the expected KL-divergence, measured in bits per reflection. The calculation makes a variety of assumptions and should be taken only as a rough guide to the correspondence between these measures of signal-to-noise in data.

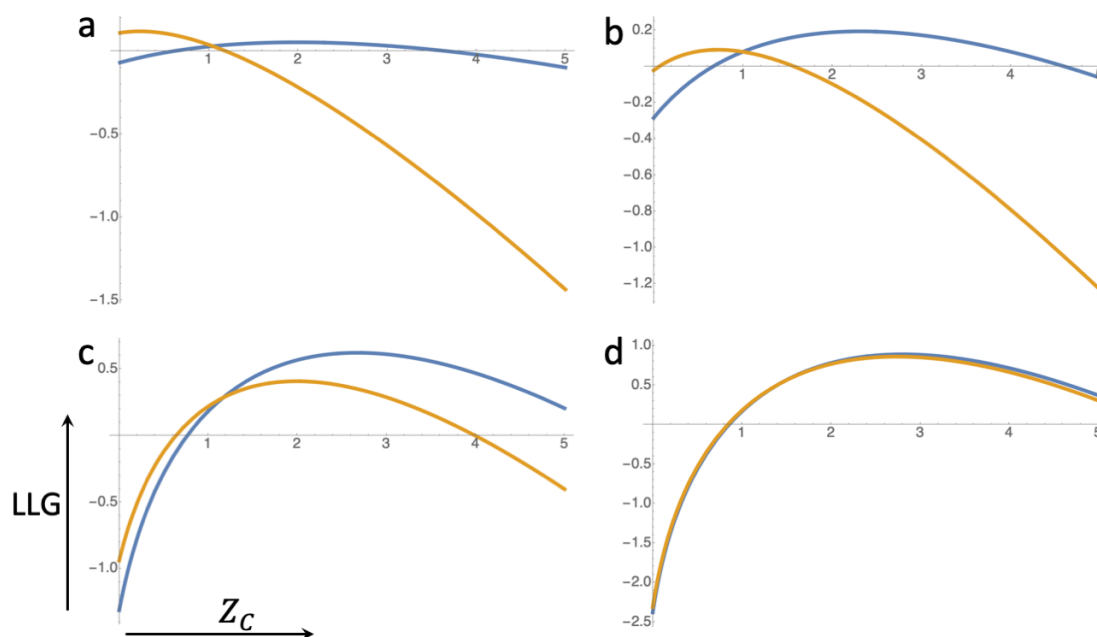


Figure 4 LLG as a function of the calculated normalised intensity, Z_C , for several levels of information gain. In each case the observed normalised intensity, Z_O , is 2.0 and the value of σ_A is 0.8, which would correspond for instance to an rms error of 0.4 Å for a model at a resolution of 2.2 Å. The LLG computed with the formula for $LLGI$ (Read & McCoy, 2016) is shown in blue, and the LLG computed with the inflated-variance Rice function LLG_{FW} is shown in orange. a) Information gain is 0.01 bit, corresponding to $\sigma_{Z_O}=2.57$, $E_{FW}=0.91$, $\sigma_{E_{FW}}=0.44$. b) Information gain is 0.1 bit, corresponding to $\sigma_{Z_O}=1.33$, $E_{FW}=0.99$, $\sigma_{E_{FW}}=0.41$. c) Information gain is 1 bit, corresponding to $\sigma_{Z_O}=0.63$, $E_{FW}=1.25$, $\sigma_{E_{FW}}=0.26$. d) Information gain is 3 bits, corresponding to $\sigma_{Z_O}=0.21$, $E_{FW}=1.40$, $\sigma_{E_{FW}}=0.08$.

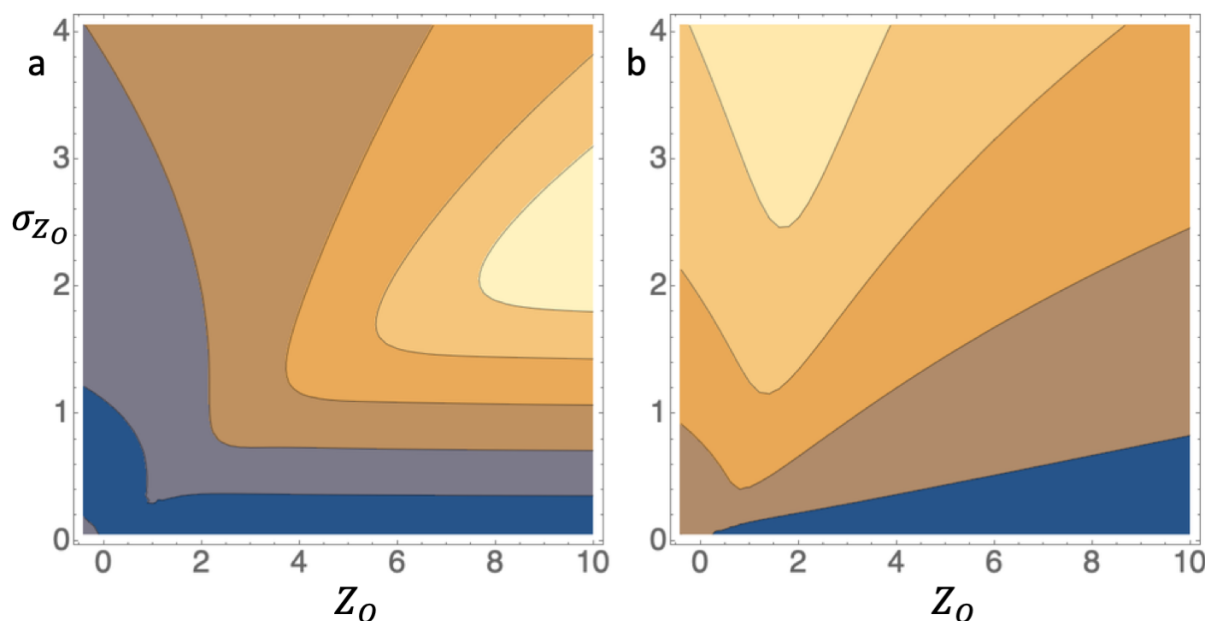


Figure 5 Contour plots illustrating, for the acentric case, the errors in likelihood scores for a perfect model arising from using French & Wilson amplitudes in the inflated-variance Rice likelihood target, as a function of Z_O and σ_{Z_O} . a) The expected rms error in the likelihood score (converted to bits for comparison with information gain), averaged over the calculated structure factors consistent with the measurement, with contour lines drawn from the blue region through orange to yellow at 0.5, 1, 1.5, 2 and 2.5. b) The ratio of the rms error from (a) and the information gain from (1a), with contour lines drawn from the blue region through orange to yellow at 0.1, 1, 10 and 100. Only well-measured intensities have likelihood errors that are smaller than the information content gained (points below the second contour line).

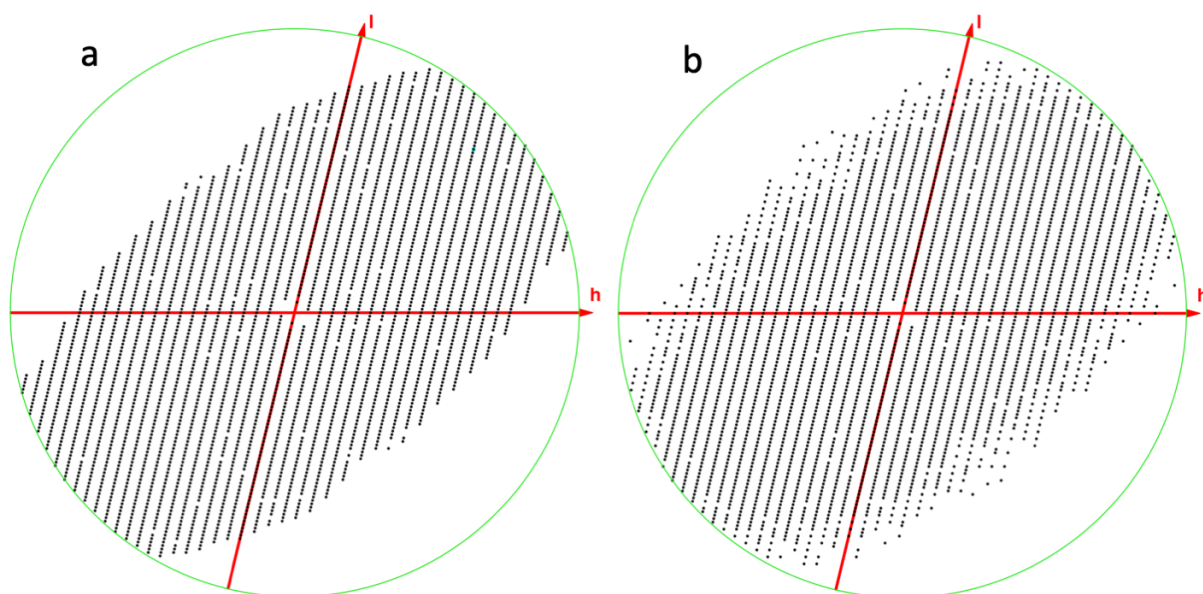


Figure 6 Result of pruning weak reflections from human Rab27a data, illustrated for the $h0l$ section. (a) The STARANISO server (Tickle *et al.*, 2018) retains 63176 reflections from the full set of 91204. (b) An information threshold of 0.2 bit retains 62836 reflections. The boundary between the retained and pruned reflections is similar, but the information measure accounts for the systematic alternation of intensities arising from tNCS, keeping some strong observations that the STARANISO approach would delete and deleting some weak observations that would be kept. Figures prepared with the CCP4 (Winn *et al.*, 2011) program viewhkl.

Table 1 Effect of information content thresholds on maximum-likelihood molecular replacement calculations using the LLG_{FW} and $LLGI$ targets

Information threshold (bits)	No. of reflections	LLG_{FW}			$LLGI$		
		Top correct	Top incorrect	Ratio	Top correct	Top incorrect	Ratio
3	12346	–†	73.7	0	–†	72.7	0
2	15765	119.7	81.0	1.48	123.5	79.8	1.55
1	19771	131.0	83.2	1.57	130.4	82.6	1.58
0.5	22278	142.5	81.9	1.74	140.0	76.9	1.82
0.1	25186	169.9	97.7	1.74	151.5	72.6	2.09
0.01	27516	222.3	164.3	1.35	152.9	74.1	2.06
0.001	29133	272.9	258.0	1.06	152.9	73.4	2.08
0	32631	–†	439.3	0	152.1	74.0	2.06

†The correct solution was not found in this molecular replacement search.

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